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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEAN](#) [TH](#) [BM](#)
SUBJECT: 2008 ASEAN LECTURE: SAMAK UNSCRIPTED, ADVOCATES UN
MONITORING OF BURMA 2010 ELECTIONS

REF: A. BANGKOK 2461
[1](#)B. BANGKOK 2621

Classified By: Ambassador Eric G. John, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Then Thai Prime Minister Samak Sundaraej delivered a brief keynote address, "ASEAN: A New Era with a People Agenda," at the annual ASEAN Lecture on September 8 to an audience of Ambassadors and high-level officials. After reading his speech from teleprompters, Samak followed with unscripted remarks on Burma. He then noted that he had to leave for a "crucial meeting" in Udon Thani -- his only reference to his ongoing political strife. Samak nevertheless found time to sing several Thai folk songs in the lobby before departing. End Summary

The formal ASEAN lecture...

[1](#)2. (SBU) PM Samak, as the leader of the ASEAN chair country, delivered the sixth annual ASEAN lecture at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on September 8, 2008. In opening remarks, Deputy Prime Minister Sahas Banditkun and ASEAN SecGen Surin Pitsuwan reiterated Thailand's goals during its ASEAN chairmanship: establish an ASEAN Human Rights Body, set up a dispute settlement mechanism, and the posting by member states of Permanent Representatives to the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta (refs).

[1](#)3. (SBU) Samak's scripted speech underscored Thailand's commitment to turning ASEAN into a "people oriented" organization and his hope to have a fully ratified charter by December. He urged Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines to join the other ASEAN members in ratifying the Charter. Samak said that he anticipated the ASEAN Human Rights Body would be completed by the end of Thailand's chairmanship in December 2009. He also added a fourth "R" to Thailand's "Three Rs" strategy for its chairmanship: reaffirming the spirit of the founding fathers of ASEAN when they signed the Bangkok Declaration on August 8, 1967 (Note: The other Three Rs are: Realization and implementation of the new ASEAN Charter; Revitalizing ASEAN as a people-centered organization; and Reinforcing human security. See reftels for more info).

...and classic informal Samak

[1](#)4. (C) In classic Samak fashion, the PM ended his official speech by saying, "these are the things that I was supposed

to say," before ad-libbing on another issue; this time, the topic was Burma. Samak told the audience that the Burmese Ambassador to Thailand had suffered a heart-attack two days earlier; explained he had sent flowers to him; reminisced about his past trip to Burma; and urged ASEAN to help Burma by inviting the UN to monitor Burma's elections scheduled for 2010. He added, "I intend to persuade Burma to accept a helping hand from the UN." Despite his insistence that he had to depart immediately for Udon Thani, where a pro-government rally and a mobile cabinet meeting awaited, Samak then stopped in the lobby to grab the microphone and sing several Thai folk songs with a traditional Thai band that had been providing background music for the scheduled post-speech reception.

JOHN